

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ROME 15913 291738Z

61

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15913

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S DISCUSSION WITH INTERIOR
MINISTER COSSIGA

1. I INVITED INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA TO LUNCH SEPTEMBER 27 TO ELICIT HIS VIEWS ON ITALIAN DEVELOPMENTS. I FOUND HIM ON THE WHOLE OPTIMISTIC THAT THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT WILL SUCCEED IN GETTING THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF ITS PROGRAM ENACTED. IN EFFECT, HE SAID THAT IT WAS GENERALLY AGREED THAT THERE IS NO REAL ALTERNATIVE TO THE MINORITY GOVERNMENT. EVEN THOUGH BERLINGUER AND AMENDOLA RECENTLY WARNED THAT THE PCI'S ABSTENTION SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED, COSSIGA SAID THAT THE COMMUNISTS REALIZE THEMSELVES THAT THEIR OPTIONS ARE SEVERELY PROSCRIBED. AS A RESULT, COSSIGA THOUGHT THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S PROSPECTS WERE "REASONABLY GOOD," WITH THE LIKELIHOOD THAT IT WOULD REMAIN IN POWER AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER THE FIRST OF THE YEAR AND BEYOND INTO THE SPRING.

2. I EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE PROGRAMS BEING PREPARED BY THE GOVERNMENT WOULD INDEED BE "DC PROGRAMS" AND NOT JOINT DC/PCI PROPOSALS. COSSIGA STRONGLY AFFIRMED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PROPOSE CLEAR DC PROGRAMS, WHICH IN CONTRAST TO PREVIOUS PRACTICE, WOULD BE PUT OPENLY ON THE TABLE FOR DISCUSSION. SHOULD THE PCI HAVE CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS TO

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ROME 15913 291738Z

OFFER, THE DC WOULD ACCEPT THEM. OTHERWISE, THE DC CONSIDERS

ITSELF IN NO WAY OBLIGED TO MAKE CHANGES. COSSIGA THOUGHT THAT NEITHER THE COMMUNISTS NOR ANY OTHER PARTY SERIOUSLY DESIRED TO JEOPARDIZE THE GOVERNMENT'S LIFE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT ECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS SUCH AS WAGE RESTRAINT PRESENTED THE GREATEST DIFFICULTIES.

3. COSSIGA CONTINUES TO HOLD THE VIEW THAT THE DC CAN ONLY BREAK OUT OF THE PRESENT POLITICAL IMPASSE BY OBTAINING THE PRESENT POLITICAL IMPASSE BY OBTAINING THE EVENTUAL SUPPORT OF SOME OF ITS FORMER COALITION PARTNERS. TO THIS END, HE CITED THE IMPORTANCE OF ACHIEVING A STRONG ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRAM. HE ALSO AFFIRMED THAT CONTINUING SUPPORT FROM THE US, THE EC AND THE IMF IS NEEDED AT THIS TIME. WITH REGARD TO THE SOCIALISTS, COSSIGA THOUGHT THAT CRAXI HAD ENHANCED HIS STATURE WITHIN HIS PARTY AS A RESULT OF HIS CONTACTS WITH SOCIALIST PARTIES IN BRITAIN AND GERMANY. CRAXI STILL REQUIRED TIME, HOWEVER, TO BROADEN THE BASE OF HIS SUPPORT IN HIS PARTY.

4. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, COSSIGA CONSIDERED THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED DC PARLIAMENTARY SEMINARS AS HAVING BEEN HELPFUL. THEY PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE YOUNG PARLIAMENTARIANS TO PARTICIPATE AND EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS ON DC POLICIES AND PROGRAMS. COSSIGA CHARACTERIZED THE DC'S UNITY AS QUITE GOOD, CONSIDERING THE STRAINS THAT THE PARTY HAD UNDERGONE AS A RESULT OF THE POST-ELECTORAL SITUATION. I TOLD COSSIGA THAT WE WERE REASSURED TO NOTE THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF ACCEPTING THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE HAD NOT EVEN BEEN MENTIONED AT ANY OF THE RECENT MEETINGS OF DC PARLIAMENTARIANS AND FACTIONS. I DID MENTION MY CONCERN, HOWEVER, OVER THE LEFTIST SLANT OF THE FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS RECENTLY EXPRESSED BY GRANELLI (DC LEFT LEADER), PARTICULARLY SHOULD HIS RUMORED CANDIDACY TO HEAD THE DC'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS SECTION BE ADVANCED. (ROME 15773).

5. IN VIEW OF COSSIGA'S PERSONAL INTEREST IN OUR COLLABORATION IN THE GOI'S PROGRAM FOR A THOROUGH SEISMIC SURVEY OF THE FRIULI, I INFORMED HIM THAT THE USGS GEOPHYSICIST JERRY EATON HAD ARRIVED AND HAD ALREADY ARRANGED WITH PROF. CAPUTO, THE HEAD OF THE ITALIAN NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL INSTITUTE, TO GO
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ROME 15913 291738Z

TO FRIULI. COSSIGA AGAIN EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR ALL THAT THE USG WAS DOING IN THE FRIULI RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM.

6. COSSIGA STILL HOPES TO VISIT THE US IN THE COMING MONTHS, BUT HIS PLANS REMAIN INDEFINITE DUE TO THE PRESS OF HIS RESPONSIBILITIES. HE HAS A SON IN CANADA AT THE PRESENT TIME AND OBVIOUSLY WOULD LIKE TO COMBINE A US TRIP WITH A VISIT TO HIS SON. VOLPE

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